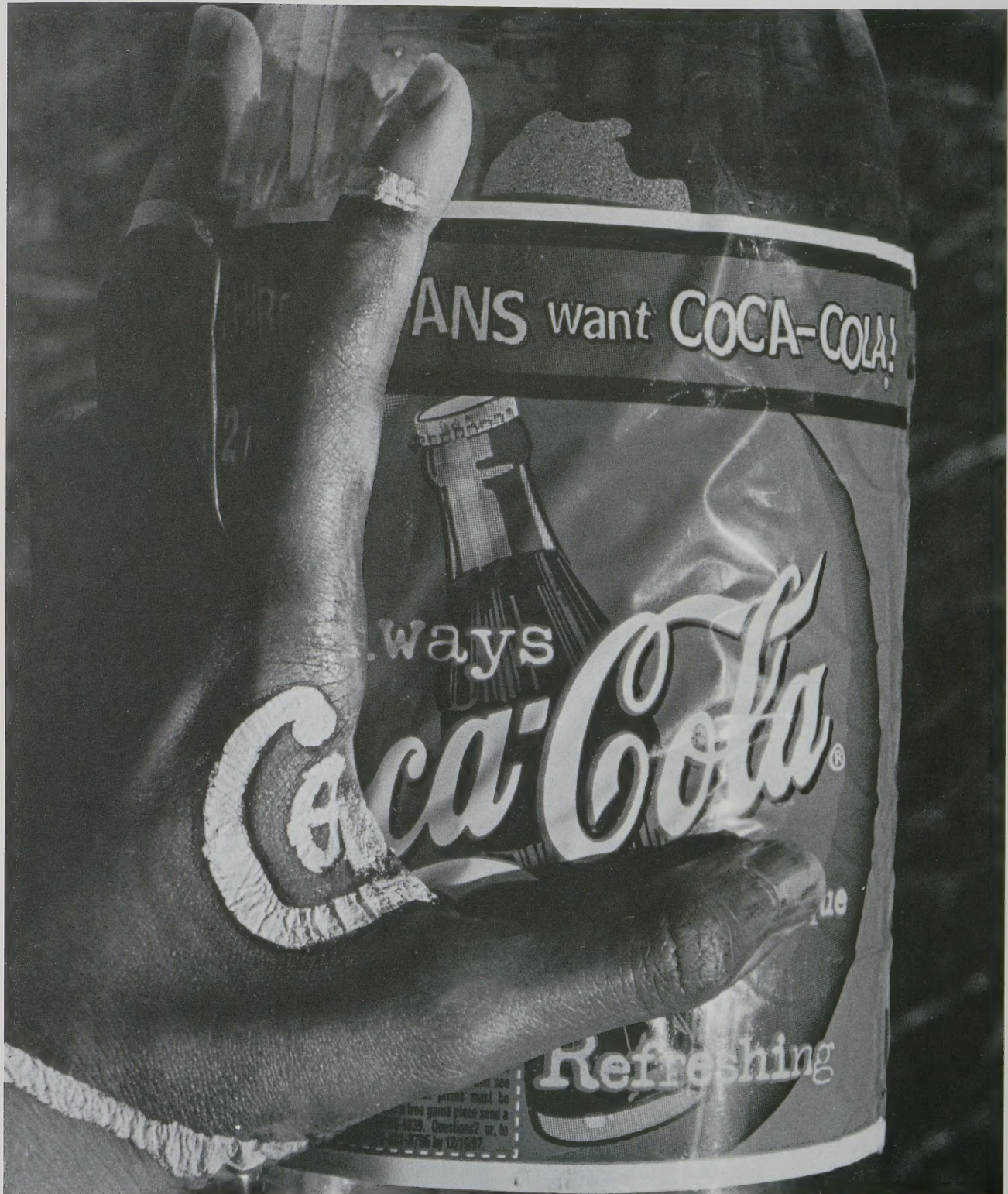


TJC Touchstone
1998



TJC TOUCHSTONE

1998



Addiction • • • • • Holly B. Reddin

FOREWARD

*He who writes his feelings reveals his heart.
She who illustrates her dreams maps out her future.*

TJC Touchstone has become more than a mere magazine. It has become the heritage of students, faculty and staff who have allowed their talents to be displayed in its pages.

With a small staff this year, this edition has been difficult to create. At times we wanted the words to erase and the art work to fade. But as we looked at the words and creativity of those who submitted their works, we began to see what a person can achieve with hard work and perseverance. That compelled us to create a magazine to honor their work.

Our time and effort on the Touchstone have taught us never to give in to that little voice inside that keeps saying, "There is no way you can do this."

We must never smother that inner voice, remembering as we continue to struggle toward the goal that one who stops trying never accomplishes anything, but one who tries and fails captures the world.

*LaShaunda Greer
Editor-in-chief*



Curiosity • • • • • Stacey J. Connor

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TJC Touchstone, Volume 13
 Tyler Junior College
 1998

About the title:

A distinctive streak left on a black touchstone when rubbed with genuine silver or gold was a foolproof test which allowed ancient civilizations to trust using coins for trade. We trust that you, too, will find genuine distinctive elements of value in the TJC Touchstone
Carolyn Hendon
 1986

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David K. Owen

.....

We Mourn the Passing

*When friends or loved ones pass away,
They are missed,
or so we say.
Oh sure,
we'll cry and shed some tears,
Then our memories fade year after year.
However there's one friend of whom we grow fond,
But not until he is gone.
For it is only then that our memories are clear,
And tend to grow stronger year after year.
So dear friend, to you we throw a kiss,
For it is you that we will miss.
Who is this friend, ask you?
We mourn the passing of our youth.*

Kay Dawson

.....

Connections

*You're the reason I do this.
Silent on the back row
Wearing your mask of indifference,
Cool armor of alienation,
Stealing glances that speak volumes.
But I know you still.
I read your heart on white paper,
Seeping between the lines.
I dab at the wounds, chinking away
At your badge of honor.
You're the reason I do this.
On row two, playing to the crowd.
I'm your straight man.
I scratch your scabs and find
Tender sores beneath the skin.
Row one lays claim to every word.
Eager for common ground to allay the fears
Of loss, failure and worse still, invisibility.*

*Mopping up the pools
of thoughts and questions
That float in the atmosphere where we meet.
You're the reason I do this.
I see you everywhere,
reminding me
Behind counters, windows and walls
We once spent time together.
Our lives crossed.
We're different now, both of us.
Living in altered states.
Your faces and places blend with the years,
Your name escapes me,
But still, I know you.
For you're the reason I do this.
You are.
You.*

It was one of those September days. The sun was hot, but the breeze held a hint of the coolness to come. As my mother and I pulled up to Sam's house, I saw her for the first time. She was sitting by the curb waiting. I noticed at once the smooth long lines of her body, and I knew then I had to have her. I was not the first and would not be the last, but that day I fell in love with the 1960 Austin-Healy 2000. She would soon be mine.

All dressed in cherry red, she had looks plus. Like a full-breasted woman, her fenders rose and rounded off in front. She wore silver chrome Cragor mags on her back tires with delicate spoked wheels on the front, and her hood was pierced by two rings laced with silver wire. Top off and low-to-the-ground, she was a beauty. Inside were two softly rolled and tucked buckets of red, a small

black steering wheel and a miniature stick shift. Gingerly sliding behind her wheel, I turned the key, and she came to life, a kitten purring contentedly. Carefully pulling away from the curb, an injection of gasoline gave her a boost of energy that she seemed to relish, and she roared off like a lion.

I met the first of two previous lovers one day when I arrived to pick her up from having her tail-pipes lifted. Dirty from his work, the mechanic stood digni-

fied in her presence. With great respect, he spoke tenderly of the wonderful nights they had shared at the races and of how he had modified her engine to give her that extra energy and stamina. Before she and I left, Cherry's first love had managed to let me know that he would gladly take her back.

Her second lover was one of those types who likes to be seen with a pretty girl on his arm. He

everything about Cherry. That is what made our union special. I knew her as no man did. While male friends would roughly force her tiny stick into gear, I would cringe at her pain. The awful grinding noise would cause me to reach out and slap their hands in her defense. Lightly placing my three fingers on the knob, I would slide it into the next gear, knowing well the close tight H formation of her gears.

From the very beginning, though, my dad was against the relationship. It was not that he did not like her, but he felt she was too fast for me and would be a bad influence. But even he succumbed to her exotic beauty, and one day he and my brother took her for a spin. Driving away, the high-pitched cry of a stretched first gear suddenly changed to a coughing, sputtering, erratic shift into fourth gear. By the time they had returned, first

and second gear were completely shot, and soon third, fourth and reverse were gone. For a month, Dad sat on the porch, a box of broken pieces beside him and the manual perched in his lap. Over and over he tried successfully to duplicate the pictures in the book.

Finally, I accepted the fact that the affair was beyond repair. I would have to give her up. Then one day her new lover appeared. He was tender as he loaded her up on the trailer, carefully placing the box of pieces into the front

.....

She Wore Cherry Red

.....

by Mitzi F. McCarty

owned a body shop, and early on in their relationship, had redone her interior and dressed her in the bright cherry red she now wore. What was under her hood did not seem to interest this man, but rather how they looked together and the impression her beauty made on other people. She was more of a plaything to him. Evidently he had tired of their affair and was already involved with a younger model Camaro.

I, on the other hand, loved

seat. "I'll take good care of her," he said. Together they drove off. That was the last I was to see of her.

Looking back to that special time in my life, the memories have become faded and dim. With just a picture to remind me

of how we looked together, I wonder if over the years my mind has not romanticized what she was really like. There is a 1989 Dodge Ram in my life now. Big, strong and dependable, he is there when I need him. I sometimes think about the little red car and what it would be like to

just take off down the highway again. But I am different in many ways now - more mature; my needs have changed. But if she pulled up in my driveway today, I would fall in love all over again with the beautiful, cherry red, 1960 Austin-Healy 2000.

• • • • •



Avenue B. Sandwich Shop, Austin Texas • • • • • Jill A. Loftis

Judy Rhodes

• • • • •

Inadequate

*Here I am,
again comparing
my gut with his skin,
my heart with his eyes,
my soul with his smile
and invariably,
I fall short
I mirror his words, cautiously
My true depth of self,
when at last revealed,
seems painfully inadequate*

Elaine D. Graybill

• • • • •

On Letting Go

*"I have it all under control," he said.
I felt the anxiety and the fear,
but I let him believe that I believed it, too.
"It is time for me to be on my own.
I knew that it was true, but was she ready
for the pain?
I stepped back, because I had to.
Now, I look at you both,
strong, independent, caring,
separate, but close,
with wonder.*

Tamara S. Brown

• • • • •

Fozzy

*With paws bent towards
heaven,
a bear stands alone in the
night.
His cry issues forth from his
personal Hell, saying,
"I don't want to be a puppet
anymore!
wakka wakka wakka!"*



Servant of Rapture • • • • • Melissa D. Meadows

Brian C. Johnson

• • • • •

A Girl

*She doesn't know what to sing.
To her, words don't mean a thing.
She tries to climb the crystal tower.
The glass beneath begins to sway.
She feels her will fall away.
In vain, she grasps the golden shards.
They cut her hands, she took it hard.*

*The bandage helps her wounds to heal,
and once again, she learns to feel.
Returning to the crystal tower.
She won't be broken by its power.*



Rebecca • • • • • Rob M. Parnell

Clarence Strickland

.....

The Late Night Country Western Golden Oldies Show

*"Please Mr. Please
Don't play B-17
It was His Song
It was Our Song
But It's Over."*

*And so begins
My friend's
late night
country western
golden oldies show.*

*I see him there
in that little room
with his records
and his
memories*

*"Take The Ribbon From Your
Hair...
Help Me Make it Through
The Night."*

*And he remembers her
waist-long hair
cascading over
bare shoulders.
Framing the pretty face
smiling down on him.*

*"Hello, Wall
I Think I'll Stare At You
A While."*

*His mind wanders
to the dark, cold
empty
apartment.
He'll return to
after work.*

*"It's Gonna Take Some Time
To Get You Off My Mind."
Whines the juke box Tammy.

And he wonders.
How much time
years have passed
and still
his memory haunts him..*

*Classic Hank moans
"Today I Passed You On The
Street.
And My Heart Fell At Your
Feet.
I Can't Help It if I'm
Still in Love With You."*

*Her voice
Her touch
Her ever-present memory*

*Will he ever
He wonders
Stop loving her.*

*"Our D-I-V-O-R-C-E
Just Came Final Today"*

*He thinks of
His little girl.
Their weekends -
and holidays.
So little time
together..*

*"He Stopped Loving Her To-
day.
They Hung a Wreath Upon His
Door"*

*And I think of
my friend there
in his little booth
with his records
and his
memories.*

*I hope he's not working alone
tonight.*

Saleh Jabr

• • • • •

Crestfallen

*Psyche in chains
Garden womb-tomb
Fly away from languid betrayals
Adjourn to the wilderness of legend
A poet's refuge
He sits with Eden in the morning dawn
Conversation and tequila
As the city rises to ravage the mother
He sits
And thinks of home*

Joan Bruckwicky

• • • • •

And So The Joke Is On Me

*A gentle summer rain fell on my childhood home.
I huddled against a backyard fence, remembering her.
Raindrops and memories misted the air;
Loneliness and bereavement consumed me.*

*Earth soothed me with the solace of her tears,
and my river of memory overflowed.
I had neither confessed my sins, nor given penance for my ways,
And I cried for the rain and recollection to absolve me.*

*The clouds burst. I saw that I was all wet.
Soaked, I knew the irrelevance of such guilt.
True, I never admitted my mistakes; so what?
Mother already knew.*

Stacy Richardson

.....

Butterfly

*Butterfly flies up,
Greets the spring's sun with
honor
And bows away low.*

Elaine D. Graybill

.....

Nightfall

*Nightfall
A plush orange moon
rests on a dark cloud bed —
nerf on blanket.*

Carolyn J. Hendon

.....

Late Fall

*Autumn leaves aflame--
Neighbor's pyre incenses me.
My leaves drift and fly.*



Kiss Me You Fool *Karin Miller*



Meditation • • • • • Brashanté J. Choice

Robert W. Rivers

• • • • •

Is Someone There?

*I lie in bed and blind from sight
Shadows creeping to avoid the light
Tap, Tap, Tap, I hear a sound
What is that tap, Where is it found?
Is someone there, I do not know
I feel a presence, It's not my own
The fear is more than I can bear
My heart is racing, I gasp for air
Is someone there? I've got to know
Should I stay or should I go?*

B.J. Crutcher Cachet

• • • • •

The Transmitter

*Around the world and back again
Never knowing where I've been
Always searching...eager...for what momentarily
satisfies my fever.
Traveling here, traveling there,
In the body, out of the body...
Coming...Going... Anywhere...Everywhere...
Transmitting, continually...relentlessly
Through sound waves of electrical devices,
Whispering in listening ears that could hear,
subtly to the masses a message...loud and clear.*

Christopher P. Cox

• • • • •

Gothic Tribal

*Gothic tribal dust
Blown by razor blade spears
Fed to the detested lunchbox gossip
Who follows the decisions of a toastbox society.
All the while the goats dance
And fear the dream of the paperboy spread
For 'tis often so
As all that goats are in knowing
Toss it
Floss it
Cook it up raw
And swim in the dirt
So you can smell the taste of death
And know why.
Save your thoughts of its sow
And hold it to grow.
So what is the price of your questful lust?
How far to push?
How long to need?
You know already.
You know already.*

As long as I can remember, I've felt my life was balanced on the edge on a cliff. I never seen a cliff — the farmland around here is mostly too flat for cliffs — but I'm sure this must be how it feels. I've never liked the feeling.

I knew someday — probably when I grew up — I'd be able to take a few steps back from the edge and maybe relax a little. Now, I don't know. The edge has crumbled and I think I'm going over. Mama already fell a long time ago. If someone as strong as she is can fall, who did I think I was?

This morning Mama walked me down our long dirt road to the bus stop. Robert, full of energy as usual, ran ahead at full speed. Mama and I followed at a slower pace. I knew something was up. She was always too busy in the mornings, what with the breakfast washing up and the hens, to walk us to the school bus.

"Lizzie, take good care of your little brother today," Mama said. I always take care of Robert. Something was up. Wouldn't do me any good to push Mama, though. She moved through life at her own pace.

Everything around us was bustlin' out with the new life of spring — male birds sweetly called for mates, a spring breeze played tag with my skirt, the

smell of the hay Dad had just mowed in the north field sharp in my nose — but Mama moved with the unhurried grace of our biggest bulls.

"You know your Aunt Lucille is sick," Mama said.

"Yes, Mama, but you said she was coming home from the hospital soon."

"Today," Mama said. "And she's gonna need someone to sit

cooking, and my chores. And someone has to take care of Robert." Mama was casual as I was.

"We'll take Robert with us. We can all work to catch up the chores when we get back." And who'll take care of me?

"Won't work, Lizzie. Your dad would never agree. He's mad enough about me going." We were at the country road now and, even over Robert's laughing and yelling, I could hear the bus coming from way off around the bend. Mama took my hand and squeezed it briefly. Without another word, she turned and began her slow walk back up the hill to our home.

The day flew by. It always did. The more I love school, the quicker it seems to go. At lunch I started to tell Robert about Mama going to

Aunt Lucille's. The fourth graders eat lunch before we do. As my class came in, I could see him across the cafeteria taking his tray to the trash cans, and laughing with Bennie Wheeler. Before I could get his attention, we were in line.

Mr. Hudson, who teaches sixth grade math and seventh grade science, stopped me to compliment me on my math test. I couldn't wait to tell Mama I'd made another "A." Then it hit me all over again. Mama wouldn't be there.

.....
House on the Hill

.....
Amy S. Glenn

with her for a while. She's off over there in Loman without any kin." Mama paused. "I thought I'd go on over there today. I can take the 1 o'clock bus. If I can help her through the next couple of days, she'll be all right by herself."

There it was. I could feel the edge of my cliff begin to crumble. I grabbed for support.

Why don't you let me go with you. You'll need help with her, Mama. Casual as could be.

"You know I can't do that, Lizzie. Someone has to do the

I wanted to tell Robert again on the bus, on the way home. I wish I were as straightforward about things as Mama. Robert's always got so many friends around him, laughing and telling jokes and playing little pranks, it was hard for me to find an opening. Then when we got to our road, Robert took off laughing, "See you in a while, slow Lizzie!"

I let Robert race up the hill. It was a beautiful day. I slowed down even more to enjoy the view of our home. Its large, graceful bulk never fails to fill me with awe. Mama was born in this house. She inherited it when her mama died. I was born in this house. For 12 years I've lived in this house. I can't imagine ever living anywhere else.

When you come around the crest of the hill, there it is. It sounds corny, I know, but it looks like a big jewel set up on that hill. On my worst day, I have only to look at that house to feel love and gratitude and the joy of being alive. Someday, Mama tells me, this house will be mine.

I have a daily routine when I get off the bus. I walk up the hill — my hill — very slowly. I watch the house. Downstairs there are big windows, open to catch the breeze in the spring and summer. The windows upstairs are smaller, with little fake shutters on the sides. In the winter sometimes the snow comes almost up to my bedroom window.

The house and the lawn are perfect. Dad insists on that.

"We're not rich," he says, "but we don't have to look like poor white trash."

When I got up to the house, I walked all the way around it, twice. I looked behind every tree and bush. I was looking for Mama. I know she's gone to Aunt Lucille's today, but the search is so much a part of my routine that I did it anyway. I know someday

"Lizzie, you left a dirty pot in the oven," he said. His voice was low and dangerous. I quickly got out of bed. That damn pot! I had forgotten it.

I'll find her there, lying dead under one of the trees.

I ended my stretch at the kitchen door. Dad was out in the east field. I could smell the faint odor of freshly turned dirt and hear the tractor running. Its faint drone was like a bass line under the song of birds and the grasshoppers. Inside the kitchen, the sounds dropped off to a faint background and I stopped for a minute to adjust my eyes to the dimness.

Mama's absence was unmistakable. There was no cheerful light to show the clean white tiles and shining refrigera-

tor, no smells of a good dinner cooking, no quiet clatter of dishes and spoons. No Mama to say: "Evening, Lizzie. Good day?" With a knot in my stomach, I headed through the kitchen and up to my room to put my books away.

By 5:28, supper was done and on the table. Mama's never been gone during a meal before, but I know what to do. I always helped Mama and she had left plenty of food in the refrigerator — all labeled in colored containers. I heard Dad come up the walk and stop at the faucet outside to wash his hands. I took a quick look around.

The kitchen was clean, except for one pot which I hadn't had time for. I put it in the oven. I figured I could wash it as soon as supper was over and maybe Dad wouldn't notice. The dining room table was so shiny I could see my face in it. The place mats, dishes, and silverware were so straight you could take a ruler to them. Robert was in his chair, clean and combed, with his hands in his lap.

"Where's Mama?" Robert asked, surprised.

"Later. Dad's on his way in."

As Dad stomped up the porch stairs I took a beer out of the refrigerator. The screen slammed shut and I turned to hand the beer to him. Dad's a big man. He looks like a farmer ought to look, hard and sunburned.

He studied me with narrowed

eyes and laughed. "Just like your mother — if you weren't so skinny with all that hair flying out over your head." With just a slight pause, he took the beer and walked on into the dining room. I followed him quickly and took my place across the big table from Robert. We both bowed our heads.

"Thank you for the food, Lord. Send us some rain. Amen," Dad said. During supper there was little conversation. Mama's absence hung over us like the rain clouds Dad is always praying for. Once during the meal Dad put down his fork and stared at me for a moment.

"Your Mama will be gone for a few days," he said. "I expect things to run as always. You'll have to miss school until she gets back."

"I have an English test tomorrow," I said carefully.

"Have to miss it. With your grades, one zero won't matter."

"Yes, sir." Robert didn't say anything.

That was it. We finished our meal in silence. Dad got up, got another beer and headed for his big chair in the living room. Robert quietly left the table and went upstairs to start his homework. I began to clear off the table.

It was almost time for bed when I finished my work. I had cleaned up the dishes, done Mama's evening chores and spent some time reassuring Robert. Once my homework was done, I put on my

nightgown and got in bed with the novel I was reading. Dad didn't really hold with "light" reading, so I always tried to read a little in my room before I went to bed.

I remember how quiet it was, with just the frogs and the crickets and the cow snuffing out in the barn. The night breeze blew my curtains out occasionally and stirred around the smell of the lemon polish Mama used on the furniture. I could feel my body

"You know how I feel about dirty things," he yelled. Bang! His hand came down on my chest of drawers. Without meaning to, I flinched.

relaxing. Then Dad opened my bedroom door. He was still in his work clothes and boots.

"Lizzie, you left a dirty pot in the oven," he said. His voice was low and dangerous. I quickly got out of bed. That damn pot! I had forgotten it.

"I forgot Dad. I'm sorry." I knew that wouldn't work, but what else could I say?

He moved across the room toward me. I tried not to look scared. I knew from watching Mama that would only make things worse. My mouth went dry and my palms got dense and I stood stock still.

"You know how I feel about

dirty things," he yelled. Bang! His hand came down on my chest of drawers. Without meaning to, I flinched.

"I work out in the hot sun all day long." His voice was low and dangerous again, but he had stopped moving towards me. "All I ask is a clean house, decent food and some peace and quiet. Is that too much to ask?"

"No, Dad."

"Your mother shouldn't have gone. She should be where she belongs. Is that too much to ask?"

"No, Dad."

"No, Dad. No, Dad," he sneered. His big hands clenched into fists at his side. "Someone has to pay for this. Someone has to make this right. You know you have to make this right, don't you?"

"I'll go wash this pot now, Dad. I'll be real quick and real quiet. Everything will be fine then," I said, too quickly, too desperately.

"You do that," he said. I started for the door, wondering how to get around Dad. Behind him, I could see Robert's frightened face. As I moved forward, I knew I wouldn't make it around Dad and I made a fatal mistake. I could feel the cliff edge crumbling and I stopped. I stopped and wiped my palms on my nightgown. Without a sound, Dad grabbed my hair and jerked me to the side.

He was so big, looming there

in front of me, that I didn't feel the pain in my head or in my neck. He stared at me for a moment and then, with one fist still clenched in my hair, he slapped me hard across the face. Robert cried out and Dad turned to face him, dragging me by the hair.

"Don't worry, boy. Your turn's coming next," Dad yelled. Robert crouched down terrified against the wall. I couldn't let Dad at Robert. Mama had always taken care of both of us. I had promised to take care of Robert. With Dad's attention on Robert, I kicked him as hard as I could on the shin. It probably hurt my bare foot more than it hurt Dad, but it surprised him enough to make him lose his grip on me for a moment. I lunged around him and jerked Robert up from the floor. As we ran for the stairs, I could hear Dad's mean laugh behind us.

"Run for the kitchen door and out to the field," I whispered to Robert.

"What about you?"

"I'll head for the front door. I'll be all right. You just stay there until

I come get you. No matter what. You hear?"

As we reached the bottom of the stairs, I could already feel Dad coming down after us. Robert was sobbing so hard he could barely catch his breath. I knew he'd need time to get the kitchen door open. I ran to the living room and fell to the floor. I could almost hear Dad's thoughts. He could catch Robert, but there I was lying on the floor. Then he was on top of me.

"I'll clean the pot, Dad," I screamed as he rolled me onto my back and pinned me to the floor.

"Of course, you will." And he hit me. I struggled to get up, to fight back. And he hit me—in the face, the stomach, the hips, wherever he could land a fist. I screamed and cried and begged. Nothing worked. I was out of strength and surely, by now, Robert had gotten away.

"There now. You stay nice and quiet like that and I won't take the baseball bat to you," Dad said as I gave in to exhaustion and pain. "You're going to be punished now and then you'll clean the pot."

His voice was calm and reasonable, but I knew what came next. I had seen it so many times with Mama. Dad shoved up my torn and dirty nightgown. He grunted and rose to his knees. As he unzipped his pants I thought about trying to run. But where? The cliff was crumbling and I was going over the edge. You don't run when you go over a cliff. You just wait until you hit bottom.

After Dad was through, I washed the pan. Dad had watched me and then gone upstairs to his room. I couldn't go to mine. It was a nice, cool night outside. I went out and laid down under a tree. After a while, the pain and trembling began to ease some.

I hope Robert made it out to the cornfield. If he could stay quiet out there until the sun comes up, I think he'd be okay. He was so afraid, though. I wish I could have gone with him to keep him from being afraid.

I like it out here. This is my house. But who knew there would be a cliff on my hill?

Brian C. Johnson

• • • • •

Identity?

You seem a nice sort.
Do you live around these parts?
Where do you come from?
Where lies your heart?

Who were you then,
and what has come to pass?
Who are you now,
and what escaped your grasp?

Do you always carry,
your luggage around with you?
Do you take the ferry,
or foot it without a clue?

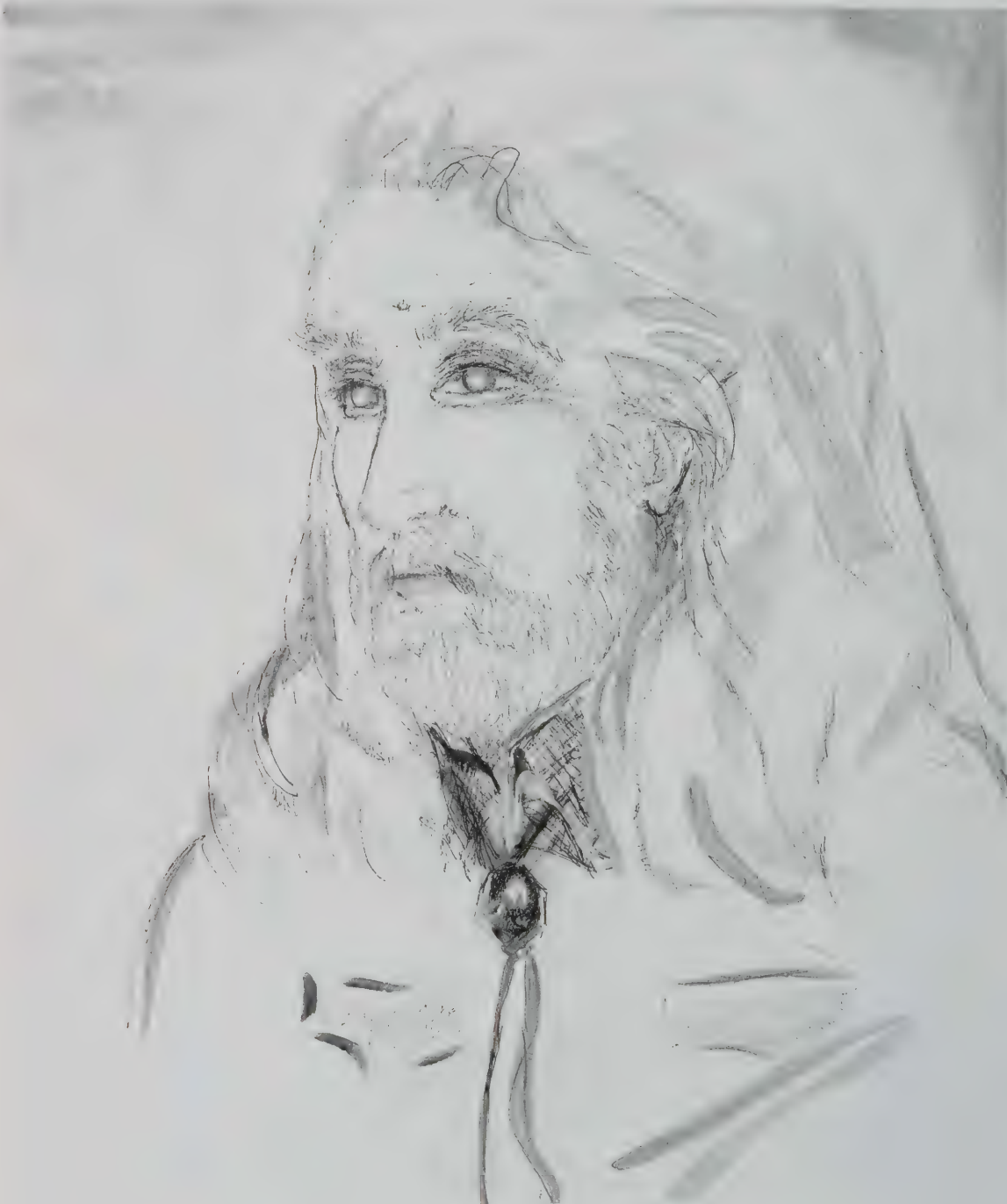
Clarence L. Strickland

.....

Fairy Tales

*In fairy tales
the ugly duckling
grows up to become
a beautiful swan.*

*In real life
the ugly duckling
grows up to become
an ugly duck.*



Strickly Speaking...The Rarest of them All..... B. J. Crutcher Cachet

Michael Wayne George

.....

Barbarians of Thought

"Step inside my mind" my sanity said to the music. "Enter freely and of your own will. Help yourself to a notion while I slip into something more comfortable," my sanity said, throwing consciousness aside. "Let us talk of better times, of heroes, saints and legends, of gods, myths and archaic solutions. Help me gather my scattered thoughts so that I might worship with outstretched hands the purple clad Dionysius."



Yikes Karin Miller

When I was a young girl, Dad used to talk about life in the Philippines. Many stories he shared were downright hilarious. Some were not so funny. Others were extremely sad. Of all the stories Dad told, one in particular became an unforgettable lesson. This story took place during the war when the Japanese invaded the Philippines Islands. Dad always seemed to have this rigid coldness in his personality. After hearing this story I came to understand how the realities of war, its casualties and the pain it can inflict, can leave scars which are too deep ever to heal.

Dad must have been about nine years old during this particular episode. By Philippine standards his parents were well-to-do — they owned a rice factory and a pineapple business. But when the Japanese

swept over the islands, they literally blew up, raided, ruined and wasted much of the inhabitants' means of support. While the Japanese occupied the area, many Philipinos were forced to evacuate, to flee from their homes and to hide like animals in the jungle.

Starvation was prevalent. Often drinking bad water resulted in death from dysentery. People in hiding were forced to hustle or steal food to survive.

Philipinos are basically a thrifty people, able to make do with just about anything. One of the main items in their diet is rice, something they would somehow find a way to get.

One humid day, Dad's Aunt Miranda said she wanted some rice. It had been a while since she had been able to enjoy a good pot of white delicious rice. Dad and his little brother happened to be nearby and heard Aunt

vered their way around an area infiltrated with enemy soldiers. After all, this would surely be where they could find a pot of fluffy rice. Smelling their way into the guarded area, the two boys decided to split up and meet back at a certain place. It was during this little operation that Dad's brother was apprehended by some military men.

Dad saw what had happened. Shivering with fear, he hid in a nearby cluster of thick bushes and continued to watch all that went on. Philippino children were taught to exercise self control and silence, Dad was definitely speechless at this moment.

Apprehended with Dad's little brother was a Philippino man. The man was somewhat tall with a large pot belly.

Dad remained silent, squatted in a crunched position as his big dark brown eyes beheld every detail of the brutal scene. It took everything in him to remain motionless and quiet as he watched these soldiers coldly and unmercifully slap his little brother down to the sandy ground. Dad wanted to jump up and fight, but to do so would render him helpless to go and try to get some help, or somehow find a way to free his little brother.

The Japanese soldiers beat

.....
Casualties of War

.....
by Marsha E. Arriola

Miranda say she would be so happy with only a small spoonful. Typical little boys, they decided to find some for her.

Despite warnings from their parents, the two boys sneaked away from the safety of their folks and family. They intended to prove their strength and fearlessness of the hated Japanese soldiers.

Certain that the Japanese would do nothing to a child, Dad and his little brother daringly maneu-

the man with clubs made from heavy rattan. When they could get no information from the man or from Dad's brother, they bound both prisoners' hands with ropes. Then they led the man out toward the bushes where Dad was hiding. Suddenly one of the soldiers picked up a machete and, quick as a frog catches a fly with his tongue, beheaded him.

Though everything inside of him wanted to yell out, Dad maintained a frozen composure. He was terrified, yet logic and home training kept him self controlled. The head of this sizeable man flew off and hit the muddy ground near a banana tree near the bushes in which Dad remained hidden.

The headless body began to walk toward Dad. It was just a few feet away. Dad did not know whether to jump up and chance running. In his mind was the gut-wrenching thought that this headless corpse might come tumbling right down on top of the bushes where he was. Somehow Dad remained curled up and completely still. Finally the man's body staggered to the opposite side.

When the Japanese soldiers were sure that the beheaded man was dead, they ordered Dad's little brother to kneel. Brutally they fired a shot into his small head. Shock, fear, guilt, helplessness and the urge to vomit engulfed Dad. At that

moment something inside of Dad just died. He felt very stupid and completely responsible for the death of his little brother.

How could he go back home to tell the family that his little brother had been murdered? It did not matter that the two boys meant well by sneaking out to get the rice for Aunt Miranda. Chil-

*Then the man was
led outward toward
the bushes where
Dad was hiding.
Suddenly one of the
soldiers picked up a
machete and, quick
as a frog catches a
fly with his tongue,
beheaded him.*

dren in the Philippines were used to the sight of blood, but this blood was the blood of Dad's little brother and there was not a thing Dad could do.

Dad was the older brother, responsible for the younger one. Philippine families lived by strict rules of obedience and discipline to survive. Dad was obligated to return home to deliver the news of this senseless killing. Somehow he did, and lived through it, but it did something to the inside of Daddy.

While growing up, Dad always taught us children that it was wrong to be prejudiced. Yet, to the end of his life he fought a fierce battle trying not

to hate the Japanese for what they had done to his little brother.

Ugly things happen even to good people, and the casualties of wars come in many different forms. Prejudice is one. Dad was able somehow to rise above his hatred for the Japanese, and it became a lesson of life for me.

When I, in humanness, have found myself experiencing prejudiced feelings, this story seems to come to mind. It becomes the impression in my mind which stops a bad seed from taking root and growing.

Dad's stories were many. This one touched the deepest. It had been one of the strongest guidelines in helping form the most powerful beliefs in my life. Without it I might never have come to understand the coldness in Dad's personality. Because of it, prejudice has never become a crutch to my life.

Brian C. Johnson

.....

Lifecycle of a Struggling Soul

*The dead tree stands with blackened roots
Observing all from its deathly roost
It knows no feeling, for it lives no more
Yet light still streams inside its core.
A fresh breath of air, a shoot begins.
It blows on past and dies again.*

Jacque Shackelford

.....

Cancer

*Mean spirited you grew
Taking tiny morsels,
Picking your teeth and
Going back for seconds.
Such mini-meals made
No mention when the body
Talked.*

*Who would miss them?
The right of ownership demands
That I ask you to stop.
This place belongs to me.
Cease and desist.*

*Make your picnic someone else.
It may not seem like much to you
But is the only place I have.*

Shirley A. Neptune

.....

If You Were a Rose

*If you were a rose
What would you be
Red, white, yellow — or all three?*

*Would your legs be weak or very strong
Short or thick or really long?*

*If you had thorns would they be brown
That wound around a golden crown?*

*If you were a rose would you like to be
Held by gentle hands that could not see?*

*Would your petals fall if the north wind
blew
And when the spring rains come
Would you feel all new?*

*When you leave your leaf prints in the
Drifting sand, do you not dream just to be
Touched by a nail-scarred hand?*

Robert C. Jackson

• • • • •

Anger

*Do you feel my anger when I
stomp my feet?*

*Do you feel my anger when I
grit my teeth?*

*Do you feel my anger when I
hit the wall?*

*Do you feel my anger when I
yell at you?*

*Do you feel my anger when I
whine and pout?*

*Do you feel my anger when I
scream and shout?*

*Do you feel my anger when my
face turns red?*

*Do you feel my anger when
nothing is said?*

*Do you feel my anger when the
pain won't cease?*

*Will you feel my anger when I
rest in peace?*

• • • • •



Autumn Seed Pods • • • • • Amy S. Wright

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be given a death sentence? What would be your reaction if you were told you had a terminal illness?

That happened to my father, Henry Wayne South, a few years back when he learned he had pancreatic cancer — a silent killer. His first response to this diagnosis was that he was thankful that God had given him 75 years to live such a wonderful life. He moved beyond the diagnosis to live each day as a gift from God. Death was sure to him at this point, but there was still a lot of life to be lived. He chose not to have any radiation or chemo. He wanted his last days to be as fruitful as possible — and they were.

He immediately began putting his financial matters in order. He went through his earthly possessions and began to distribute them to those he loved. He went to see his daily friends who had meant a lot to him. My father and mother, two sisters, my son and I went on the trip with him. We even videotaped his “sentimental journey.” After his friends discovered that he only had a short time to live, they began visiting him and my mother daily. We kept a log of all the friends, food and cards they received during that period. It was amazing to see the support from his church

family at the First Baptist Church in Mount Pleasant, where he had been a member for 41 years.

It was his Christian faith that kept him going. He had been preparing his whole life for this journey to paradise, and now he was ready to meet his Creator! Each person who knew my father and whose life he touched marveled at his attitude toward death. During his last few weeks, these words from the book, “Heaven,” by Joseph Bayly,

their cemetery plot.

We decided that the funeral would be a praise celebration of his life. He chose the preacher, the pallbearers and the music. He chose the program with the scripture from Ecclesiastes 3:1 : “To every thing, there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die . . .” Inside I typed all the necessary information. This would be distributed at the funeral. He approved it all.

Only one big obstacle now stood in his way. “His” church, where he had been a deacon for 35 years, was under major construction. The auditorium of the church was being remodeled and was not usable. The completion date had been changed to Oct. 15. My father thought that would be a little too late. This was a real concern for him because he was determined to have his funeral

service in his own church.

Each week he would go by the church to check on its progress and to tell the workers to hurry up so he could have his funeral in the new auditorium. They worked diligently to complete the church. When he was too weak to go to the church, some friends brought him a video of it so he could see the progress.

My father lived only two months after his diagnosis. He died calmly at home on Sunday

.....

To Everything There Is a Season

.....

Judy G. Newman

meant much to him:

“Some things I enjoy seem to be fading away as I see heaven in the distance. Others are vastly important. My values seem to be changing. I may not long for death, but I surely long for Heaven.”

I accompanied him and my mom to the funeral home to pick out their caskets and to make the arrangements for his funeral as well as hers. Several years before they had already bought

morning, Sept. 29, 1991.

The church pews were delivered on Monday, and the custodians worked all night to get the church ready for his funeral on Tuesday morning. Just as my dad had known, the Lord worked

things out. The funeral was held in the beautiful new sanctuary. It was a true memorial service, a celebration of his life.

He lived his life by faith and he died by faith. Through this experience he taught us a valuable

lesson — live each day to the fullest because you never know which day will be your last. He spent his life teaching his family how to live. After receiving his death sentence, he began to teach us how to die.



Rocket Man • • • • • Leah N. Moser

Judy B. Rhodes

• • • • •

Song of Birth

*Sister Moon
Is round and full
before she wanes
Giving birth
to yet
another star*

*As I breathe
and drink
the song of night,
My spirit smiles
in greeting
to the sky*

*Sister Moon
my time is now
to bear my child
And I shall offer
to your kiss
a mother's joy*

*Then, with the whispers
of the loving
wind behind me
I shall bring
my tiny gift
back to my tribe.*

Robert C. Jackson

• • • • •

Smile Now, Cry Later

*Dad, I hurt my finger.
Smile now, cry later, you'll be all right.
Dad, I'm full of fright.
Smile now, cry later, you'll live through it.
Dad, they say I can't do it.
Smile now, cry later, you're not dead.
Dad, I hear funny voices in my head.
Smile now, cry later, you sound like a fool.
Dad, I'm tired of being cool.
I'm dying inside.
My best friend just died.
Guess what, father?
I realized, I'm a man now
so I sat down and cried.*

"Maybe that is Greta Garbo!" I thought as I hurried across the crowded New York street and glanced to my right at an older woman with gray, shoulder-length hair. I faced forward to avoid running into someone ahead of me. When I turned to my right again, the woman was gone. As I frantically looked around, I mused, "That would be just like Garbo to disappear and blend into the crowd."

This incident occurred in 1987. I had become fascinated with Garbo after seeing the 1984 movie "Garbo Talks" in which a young man (Ron Silver) finds Garbo, who visits his mother (Anne Bancroft) in the hospital and thus fulfills his mother's dying wish. From reading about the Swedish star Greta Garbo, I had discovered she had come to Hollywood when she was 19. During the 1930s she was America's highest paid woman, but she chose to retire at 36 after making the film "Two-Faced Woman" in 1941. Declaring in her laconic, understated way that Swedish beauty never lasted long, Garbo had moved to New York City, where she would anonymously

walk the streets looking quite natural and unadorned. In her plain slacks and low-heeled shoes, she bore no resemblance to the glamorous movie star of such acclaimed costume dramas as "Mata Hari" (1931), "Queen Christina" (1933), "Anna Karenina" (1935) and "Camille" in 1937. Although I enjoyed watching the video tapes of these films, I preferred Garbo's only comedy "Ninotchka" (1933) because Garbo looked more like her natural self, wearing an unornamented white sailor blouse, a navy blue skirt and low-heeled shoes. This was the real Garbo. After 11 silent films and 15 talkies, Garbo just walked away

from MGM and Hollywood.

Although Garbo never gave interviews or sought the limelight after her retirement, some of her friends published autobiographies in which they had commented on her tastes and attitudes. I liked her individualistic, yet natural style. She insisted on being her own unpretentious and unaffected self. Having read that she lived at 450 East 52nd Street, I walked by her apartment house a few times while I was in New York in 1987. I don't know if I ever saw her, but I lingered outside her apartment building and said a silent prayer for her soul because she always expressed doubt about the existence of God. I sent her a Bible with her name embossed

on the cover in gold lettering. She never wrote me.

Garbo, a very private person, was widely known as one of the world's most reclusive persons. She insisted the most famous quote attributed to her was a misquote. "I never said, 'I want to be alone.' I only said, 'I want to be left alone.' There is all the difference in the world."

.....

In Quest of Greta Garbo

.....

by Judith A. Caswell

After my New York trip, I figured I would never see Garbo or meet anyone who had seen her or talked to her. After all, the movie "Garbo Talks" was only fiction. Ironically, I was proven wrong in my hometown of Tyler, Texas.

At TJC one day history instructor JoAnn Atkins told me that our colleague Dr. Bob Peters had met and talked to Garbo or some female movie star when he was a boy. As I rushed over to Dr. Peters' cubicle, I thought, "Surely, Dr. Bob met some more accessible star like Bette Davis, Katherine Hepburn, Joan Crawford or even Marlene Dietrich!"

Dr. Bob confirmed he had met Greta Garbo. During the winter of 1956, when he was 14, he was in Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York for surgery to repair a detached retina he had incurred while playing basketball.

"I was in the eye institute part of the hospital for six or seven weeks," Peters said. "It was a fairly democratic place because the private rooms and the semi-private rooms were all in the same area. My semi-private room was about 15 yards from the first class suite down the hall. We would hear about famous people such as Burl Ives who had stayed in this first class suite down the hall. One day someone said Greta Garbo was in this suite. She had either had cataract or glaucoma surgery. Unlike my surgery, hers had been successful."

"One Wednesday or Thursday night at about 7:30, she came into my room and introduced herself. She brought me a dish of chocolate ice cream. She was a quiet, but nice and friendly lady with a European accent. She asked me where I went to school. I told her I was from Tyler, Texas, where my father was an accountant. She wanted to know if I was lonesome because I was there by myself, and she asked about the prognosis on my medical procedures. She patted me on the hand and left. I really didn't know enough

about her at the time, so I failed to ask any questions about her career."

"After Garbo died in 1990, the newspapers ran stories about her being a recluse who made every effort to conceal herself from other people. I told my wife Judy I had met Garbo once when she would have been

**When I asked
God for a sign
about the state of
her soul, I
suddenly realized
that Garbo had
died on Easter
Sunday.**

about 50 years old. I would never have thought she was so reclusive because she was quite friendly and was sincerely interested in me," he said.

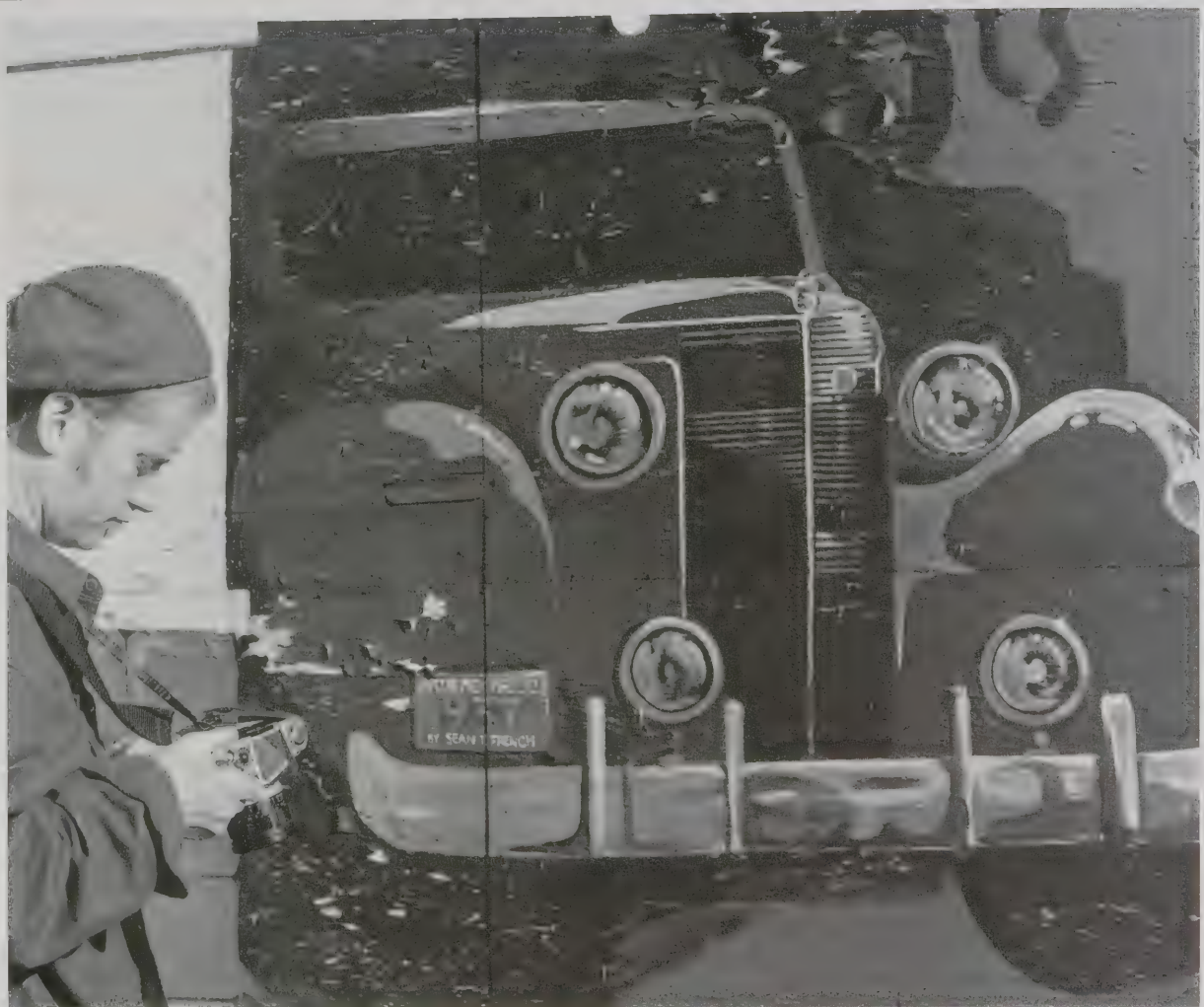
"My wife said it was really phenomenal that I had met Greta Garbo and that she came to see me. I didn't go to see her. Yes, she came down the hall in her little slippers and her nightgown to see me. Then I realized what a rare occurrence this was."

"I did see her although I could not see very well at the time. Back then surgeries for detached retinas were successful only about one out of five times. Bob Hope had one of the successful ones, but

mine was not. Actually, I had four operations: two in 1955 and two in 1956. The two in 1956 were about a week apart. I met Garbo after the second operation in 1956."

Dr. Bob's Garbo story impressed me with his bravery as a young boy alone in New York, enduring four operations on his eyes. His matter-of-fact tone struck me as lacking any bitterness or self-pity about his failed operations and subsequent blindness. Here was true profile in courage! For a few minutes in 1956, the elusive Garbo had assuaged the loneliness and homesickness of my colleague when he was a teenager more than a thousand miles from home.

Greta Garbo died on April 15, 1990, in New York City Hospital. Over the years, I had continued to pray for her. When I asked God for a sign about the state of her soul, I suddenly realized that Garbo had died on Easter Sunday. That was my sign! I would meet Garbo, as the old gospel song says, on "a day that never yields to night."



1937 Revisited • • • • • Jill Loftis

Judith A. Caswell

• • • • •

My Aunt Naomi

*As I consider my aunt Naomi, I sense images of action.
 Red-haired and stout, she stands at the stove stirring chicken soup.
 In the two-story family house in Gary, Texas, where she lived for seventy-three years,
 She bends down to check the buttermilk piecrust in the oven.
 Like the Biblical Martha, Aunt Naomi spent a lifetime feeding hungry people:
 Her mother Pearl and father Woolsey, her sister Frances and her husband Julian,
 Her brothers Travis and B.H. and his wife Peggy.*

*Her seven nieces and nephews: Judith, Clay, Susan, Nancy, John Ben, Naomi Carol and Robert.
She cooked breakfasts of eggs, sunny side up, and biscuits to soak in ribbon cane syrup.
Lunches of hamburgers better than Whataburgers garnished with lettuce and tomatoes from her
carefully-tended garden.*

*Dinners of chicken and dumplings, sweet potatoes, fried apple turnovers or blackberry pies.
Aunt Naomi cared for and fed animals. On a winter day she places a box filled with
baby chickens close to the warmth of the gas heater.*

She calls, "Chick, chick, here chick, chick!" as she broadcasts the feed around the yard.

She reaches under a Rhode Island Red to gather two brown eggs.

*She holds a frankfurter in one hand and her hoop in the other as she coaxes her English shepherd
Archie to jump through the hoop.*

After a watermelon feast on the front porch, Aunt Naomi draws water from the well,

Pours it on the porch and sweeps the sticky seeds into the front yard for her hens.

*Aunt Naomi showed her love through actions. I see her visiting relatives like the old cousins Cleve-
land and German.*

Who never mowed the grass because it would die in winter anyway,

And cousin Bertie Lee, who poured her coffee into a saucer and then drank it from the saucer.

I see her bringing cucumbers and green beans from her garden to the Gary shut-in,

Whom we called Miss Effie, even though she had been married three or four times.

I observe Aunt Naomi attending myriad events of nieces and nephews:

*Band and choral concerts, musicals and recitals, baseball and basketball games, church pageants,
rodeo parades.*

I hear her saying, "I'm statisfied that no one is a better singer, student, choir director,

*Horseback rider, piano or clarinet player, accountant, air traffic controller, civil service worker,
teacher, farmer or rancher than my nieces and nephews!"*

I watch Aunt Naomi at First Baptist Church leading the children's choir in "Jesus Loves Me"

Or teaching the ladies' class about Moses receiving the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

I hear her rattling pots and pans after the rooster's crow at 5 a.m.

But I never hear or see her crying. Once I asked her why she never cried.

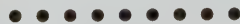
She said, "I can't see that it does me any good to cry."

Now that she has left this world,

I can hear her joyous voice in the heavenly chorus, just as we heard her voice

Singing "When the Roll is called Up Yonder, I'll Be There."

And she is!



Alissa C. Scott

• • • • •

Heart of a Champion

*I'll never quit, I'll never stop.
I'll never let my teammates down.
I'll never give up because I
Am the heart of a champion.*

*I know medals cannot be won
with motions and pounding feet;
so, as the heart, I am determined
always to win, not just to defeat.*

*The athlete that contains me
can never hold me long;
for I rise up above the rest
and pursue all; even those the best.*

*So, amidst all my glory,
and among my losses;
I remain strong, remain forever true—
Because I shall never let myself down.*

*And, always a winner,
I am determined to hold through
and never give up; because I
am the heart of a champion.*

• • • • •

B.J. Crutcher Cachet

• • • • •

The Man Who Can

*While on my journey to a far and distant land
I paused to linger in the essence of the man who can.
Then bounding on my way one long-awaited day,
I followed the mighty sound of the trumpet..and found
to my disappointment... not many at all had answered..
THE CALL.*

Alissa C. Scott

• • • • •

Never Give Up

*Never give up, for times will be hard; fight for what you believe,
and you will be led to the truth, and rewarded with victory.
Don't ever give quit, though obstacles arise, run with your heart
and fly to the end to understand new strengths and power.
Don't give up, even on a rocky path. There is always a way to
break through and see between many trees, a clear sky.
Never give up whatever you do, or you will lose your creed,
your personality, your life
and soon you will be struggling more than before.
Never EVER give up!*

The potter takes a lump of clay and begins to knead it.

"What should I make?" she wonders. "Something useful or something beautiful or something both useful and beautiful? Or should I let the clay decide for itself?"

As she kneads the clay, she dreams. It's the nature of this creatress — she is a dreamer. Her fingers slide down the clay, shaping it with movements slow and sensual, feeling her way.

"We are like clay," she thinks.

When we are young, we are flexible like clay. Life shapes us in one direction or another. But once the clay is shaped, it's still possible to change the form. And when clay cracks, it can be repaired. Such repairs require water. Simply water.

Thinking about the similarities between clay and her own life, she thinks to herself, "Is that the reason for tears?"

Perhaps. Why not? When the trials of life make cracks in one's existence, one can heal the wounds with tears.

"It's true," she thinks.

How often one washes away the pain of life with tears. And afterwards, one begins again, a new woman.

"But how often can I do this?" she wonders. "How often can I remake myself? This clay that I shape in my hands will become solid when I fire it. It will be nothing without the firing."

She continues shaping the clay, her fingers gliding as a body appears—a head, shoulders, breasts. And she continues to dream..

"But I don't want to be a thing," she thinks. "I hate the idea."

Ah, this is the problem. Many people think that one should make something of oneself. And because one tries to remain soft, to remain flexible, other people often think that they can shape another to their own wills. Each time it happens, one must repair oneself with tears.

Still, she continues shaping the clay. Arms, a back, hips and legs appears as her fingers slide over the clay. And her dream continues..

"I am like this clay, but I am not clay. I am alive. Unless I want to become hard, I must avoid the fire."

Once burned in the fire, all the tears in the world cannot soften one. It's over. One will be a thing

forever. One can be cracked, one can be broken and, yes, one can be repaired, somewhat. But one would never be the same again.

She forms a face — eyes, a nose, cheeks, and a mouth—out of the clay in her hands.

"There!" she says. "You are my creation, and I am my creation too. You I will burn in the fire. You are the model of what I am, for now. You will be a thing, but I must continue renewing myself with my tears."

Translated from the French by the author.

.....
The Potter's Tears
.....

by Sarah B. Bennett

I remember the road. It was as straight as a string. It was flat and black. It was three miles long. The ditches were wide and shallow. The grasses that grew in them were close-cropped, and, under the taut barbed wire fences that lined the road, they had been beaten down to the bare earth. I remember the waves of heat rising up from the blacktop like the spirits of the dead. I remember. You don't forget three miles of road once you've swept it with a push broom – in July – in Texas – in prison. I remember.

The back gate is burned into my mind. Twenty feet tall it was and topped with three strands of barbed wire. Not enough. Not imposing enough. Not dangerous enough. Not enough – so there was more. Three rows of concertina wire, like giant, evil, three foot wide Slinkys, shining in the cruel West Texas sun like Lucifer's own jewelry. It was the portal into and out of purgatory. It was the dream that stayed with us day and night. It was the ingress to Hell and the egress to Heaven. It was the first bitter taste of a pill that had to be swallowed; a dose of reality that couldn't be ignored. The back gate is burned into my mind.

I still see the buildings – only when I dream the dreams that I can't escape – but I still see the buildings. The chow hall, the dorms, the library, the wardens' office, the laundry – I still see them. I don't want to, but I do. They are all tall. They are long. They are silver. They hurt your eyes in the sun

– in July – in Texas – in prison. They are so bright that you'd almost rather look at the sun. It couldn't hurt any more than to look at those buildings. I still see the buildings. My eyes still burn, still squint. I still squint, tighter, and tighter until I can't see anything at all. But I still see the buildings. In my mind's eye, I still see the buildings.

The land was no better. The Unit, the farm was no relief from the stifling atmosphere of the place. "The

Squat, twisted, and covered with thorns as sharp as steel needles. Thorns with a nasty little surprise, poisonous barbs. Barbs that would swell your fingertips to the size of golf balls.

Nothing you'd want to touch lived there. Rattlesnakes lived there, six footers, diamondbacks, almost invisible against the dry brown grasses and dirt. Scorpions lived there, big yellow-brown recluses, the fiddle-back, whose bite rotted quarter-sized chunks of flesh

out of your arms and legs. Tarantulas lived there. Big, hairy, lurking just out of sight under that piece of tin or behind that sack of fertilizer. Maybe alone. Maybe with a hundred of her babies on her back. Crawling over and over one another, squirming and churning, hungry babies on her back. Crawling over and over one another, squirming and churning, hungry and waiting. Nothing you'd

want to touch lived there. Nothing you'd want to touch. The land was no better.

No place you'd want to go, this prison. No place you'd want to go. Hundreds of miles from friends and family. Hundreds of days to contemplate the errors of your ways. Hundreds of men who are as angry and full of hatred as you are. Men who spew venom and bile at themselves and those around them out of powerlessness, hopelessness, bitterness. No place you'd want to go, this prison. No place you'd want to go.

• • • • •
*No Place You'd
 Want To Go*
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by Marsha E. Arriola

Big Country," that's what the TV newsman called the land that surrounded the storehouse where society's misfits were housed like cattle for the profit of the criminal justice entrepreneurs.

It was flat by the standards of a farm boy from the Ozarks. It was dry by the standards of a man who lived in East Texas. Nothing you'd want to touch grew there. Nothing you'd want to touch. No trees to hug or climb or to rest under. No trees but those cruel jokes they called trees, those mesquites.



Family Portrait • • • • • Brashanté J. Choice

When I was ten, Mahalia Jackson came to sing at a Baptist church on Chicago's south side. I was spellbound by her majestic presence. Indeed, Mahalia's voice and unique style of gospel singing so fascinated me that, a few years later, I began following her from church to church to listen. Then, in 1947, when a group of church singers and I were on program with Mahalia, she asked me to play the piano for her.

It was a glorious moment. I could scarcely believe that I was really playing for the great Mahalia. Shortly afterward, I became her regular accompanist, and soon she was like an elder sister to me. Mahalia was then only in her mid-thirties and I was only 15, but she had already accomplished enough to be an inspiration to any young person. For the next 25 years, I traveled with her as she struggled to achieve greater triumphs as a singer and as a human being.

Mahalia was born into a preacher's family in 1911. She grew up in a river-front shanty in New Orleans. She was motherless at five and working as a maid and laundress in her teens. As a girl, she would whisper to herself before she went to sleep,

"Someday the sun is going to shine down on me in some far-away place."

In pursuit of that dream, Mahalia migrated to Chicago when she was still a teenager. She never expected to support herself by singing, and by the time I joined her, the hands she used so expressively in her performances had scrubbed floors, laundered and helped her earn

called "Move on Up a Little Higher" which she recorded in 1946. The record, which some critics call her masterpiece, eventually sold 2.5 million copies and made her famous with black people coast to coast.

She later titled her biography "Movin' On Up" the phrase that expressed a major motivating theme of her life. The message for her and for young people was, "You, too, can make something of yourself."

Mahalia once told me how her own "Moving on Up" had been slowed to a stop. When she first began singing gospel music in Chicago, conservative ministers in small Negro churches found her New Orleans-born rhythms handicapping and undignified. The larger churches refused to let her sing, but Mahalia Jackson fought back by giving concerts

in little storefront and basement churches. Admission cost a dime. She nailed up her own signs on fences and telephone poles. When they criticized her emotional style, she would reply, "How can you sing prayerfully of all Heaven and Earth and all God's wonders without using your hands?"

Mahalia had never formally

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Unforgettable Mahalia Jackson

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by Helena Jean Howard

a living as a hotel maid, factory worker, beautician and florist.

But her remarkable voice brought her more invitations to sing at funerals, churches and concerts. And through her warm friendly personality and a life based on sound spiritual values and hard work, she eventually found her place in the sun.

Out of memories of her youthful struggle came a spiritual

studied music and could not read a line of printed music score. Yet, she knew exactly how she wanted to sing a song. Her interpretations were often overwhelming emotional experiences.

Within her were the heritage of Negro life in the Deep South, the calls of the fieldhand slaves on plantations and the resounding music from the brave, wooden Holiness churches whose congregations would stand to sing accompanied by a drum, cymbal or tambourine.

During my years with Mahalia, I witnessed and felt the power of her music on others. Sitting at my piano on the stage, I often saw men and women burst into tears because of the emotional inten-

sity. The same thing happened during our concerts in foreign lands, when the fervor of the gospel music cast its spell on people, even though they could not understand the English verses. As one music critic said of Mahalia, "She transported millions of listeners to share her joyous, unshakable faith in the bounty of the Lord."

Mahalia Jackson has helped many people come closer to a life of spiritual uplift. The delight and fulfillment she elicited in her singing went far beyond the bounds of religion. Her music expressed the joy of living and an indomitable faith in the human spirit.



Release • • • • • Samuel O. Torres

Our History

TJC Touchstone was founded in 1986 as part of Tyler Junior College's 60th anniversary celebration. The magazine, designed and edited by journalism students, contains works by students, faculty and staff at the College. TJC Touchstone competes as a member of the Texas Community College Press Association with other community colleges and through Texas Intercollegiate Press Association with universities and community colleges of similar enrollments, 7,500 to 50,000 students.

1997 TCCJA, second place for magazine overall excellence to Jamie Melton and staff, first place for non-photo illustration, "Recondite" by Jesse Jones, honorable mention for magazine photography, "Old Time Barn" by Jennifer Pecquet.

1996 TCCJA, first place for magazine overall excellence to Jamie Melton and staff, first place for non-photo illustration, "June Leaf" by Shelly Haines, third place, magazine cover design and non-journalism story, "Generosity" by Linda Honeycutt.

1995 10th Anniversary Issue, TIPA, second place photo by Kevin Ray Harris, third place for a single issue, overall excellence and short story by Teresa Lanier; TCCJA, third place overall excellence, honorable mention for best overall literary magazine.

1993 TIPA, second place for best overall literary magazine, first place for cover, second place for typography, layout and design by staff, feature photo and illustration; honorable mentions for single issue and illustration.

1992 "Passages," second in layout and design, fourth best overall literary magazine among Texas junior and senior colleges of similar enrollment, TIPA.

1991 "Carpe Diem."

1990 "Sunlight and Shadows," honorable mention, magazine sweepstakes and overall magazine excellence, TCCJA.

1989 "Prospect and Retrospect," best overall, TIPA; honorable mention, magazine sweepstakes, TCCJA; second place, Columbia Scholastic Press Association, Columbia University, New York.

1988 "Dreams and Nightmares," best magazine, Southwest Region, Community College Humanities Association; best overall, TIPA; third place, typography layout and design, TJCCJA.

1987 "Sunrise, Sunset," second place, overall literary magazine, TIPA; honorable mention, layout and design, TCCJA.

1986 "Nostalgia and Now," first place, layout and design, TCCPA (now TCCJA) and TIPA.

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